

## Reviews

Social Work with Young People in Care:  
Looking after children in theory and practice

*Nigel Thomas*

Basingstoke, Palgrave Macmillan, 2005, 232pp. ISBN 1403920508 (pbk) £17.99

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*Social Work with Young People in Care* takes readers on a comprehensive, albeit broad-brush, tour of the looking after children and young people landscape and it does this via a number of accessible pathways. Initially, the talking style of the book felt a tad patronising but I guess the author may well have drawn substantially upon teaching sessions and lecture notes in order to develop this into a book that can reach a wide audience. The danger, however, is that it only skims the surface on what is a complex, contested and challenging area of theory and practice. However, Nigel Thomas does provide clear signposts to take the issues further and deeper and he cannot be held responsible if readers chose not to do so.

The book is punctuated with exercises that can help readers to engage with the issues, additionally, of course they can also be a useful resource for trainers and teachers. At the end of each chapter, key points are summarised and the reading guide provides a flavour of what the recommended books have to offer.

The first half of the book provides the theory and context to working with looked after young people. It covers a number of key themes, principles and theories that relate to children and young people in care which includes chapters on the Needs of Children in Care, Listening to Children and Law, Policy and Practice in Looking After Young People. Sadly, the law section is already dated since it does not respond to the Children Act 2004.

The second half of the book focuses on practice. Again this is a comprehensive journey through some of the key practice areas and sites. The chapters cover: Assessment and Planning, Placement and Contact, Residential and Foster Care, Adoption and Working for Permanence, Leaving Care and After Care. The final concluding chapter examines 'Outcomes, effectiveness and good practice'.

This book is particularly pleasing in the way in which it links the looked after system, so often ghettoised, to the rest of children and family social work. In so doing it provides clear routes for foster carers, residential staff, social workers and

interagency staff to work together with children and young people. Furthermore, this book could help practitioners keep abreast with a raft of research and theory publications which, as the author points out is difficult to do even for a university lecturer.

*Social Work with Young People in Care* is a book that should definitely be added to the indicative reading lists for social work students and staff.

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